

FAQs for the HSR&D FY07 CoE Solicitation

Q1. Does the reference to “previous center review notification letter” mean the 2 page letter from September of 2003 entitled “Results of Periodic Review?”

Answer. Yes. If you are unable to locate your Center letter, please contact Susan Schiffner at Susan.Schiffner@va.gov in HSR&D for a copy.

Q2. Are the Director and Associate Director required to have 50% effort designated for Center activities? What are considered Center activities?

Answer. Yes. The requirement for the Center leadership to commit 0.5 FTEE to CoE activities has been in place for many years. The 1204.3 handbooks from 2001 forward and the FY2005 Solicitation explicitly state this requirement. The current solicitation is consistent with this requirement by stating the Center Director and Associate Director must: “Devote at least 0.5 full time employee equivalent effort (FTEE) to CoE activities.”

Center activities would include administrative oversight, mentoring, program development, recruiting, and many other leadership tasks. The 0.5 FTEE time allocation “cannot overlap with other research activities such as funded research projects.”

Q3. On page A-4 of the solicitation, what is the difference between iii, b (“Potential achievements”) and iii, c (“future activities”)?

Answer. This refers to the Appendix, Section 3, d, iii, a-c, that discusses Productivity and has 3 components. The main description for Productivity requests that applicants, “Discuss **existing** achievements and **potential** for obtaining intra and extra-mural project funding, career development awards, and producing publications focusing on existing and potential achievements, and other **future** activities based on the proposed, continued or new focus of the center.” These highlighted areas are to be broken down to include specific information about existing research project achievements, potential research project ideas the CoE/investigators have planned and other future activities such as seminars, collaborations, workshops, presentations, programs, etc., planned by the Center that further advance health services research.

Q4. Are the 10-1313-7 and 10-1313-8 forms required for the CoE application since they are no longer required for the IIR program submissions?

Answer. Yes, they are required for this CoE solicitation.

Q5. To calculate the number of funded PIs in the CoE applications, will the HSR&D annual report definition of PI be used for the eligibility criteria? Or will current HSR&D funding be used.

Answer. The following is the description in the solicitation for eligible PIs:

- a. Investigators. At the time of application there must be a minimum of:

- i. Four (4) VA HSR&D funded principal investigators engaged in research projects (IIR, SDR, QUERI, or special solicitations) and one (1) Research Career Development Scientist (RCD), or Merit Entry Review Program Scientist (MREP) level or CDA-2 level under the new Career Development policy or
- ii. Five (5) VA HSR&D funded principal investigator engaged in research projects (IIR, SDR, QUERI, or special solicitations).

This is interpreted as individual PIs rather than simply funded investigators, and a PI can only be counted once. Only the primary HSR&D PI is calculated in this eligibility criteria. If an investigator is PI on two funded HSR&D projects at their location (i.e., IIR, SDP, etc.), only one of the projects would be eligible toward the number of funded PIs at that Center. Co-PIs do not count and the projects are expected to have approximately 2 years or greater of funding. This is consistent with the FY06 annual report calculations of funded PIs at current Centers.

Q6. Should tables of funded and related projects only include HSR&D funded studies?

Answer. No. Section 3, d, iii, a-c and Appendix 2 discuss inclusion of tables for existing and potential achievements, related ongoing projects, and future activities that may include all sources of funding. For example, Section 3, d, iii, a, states: “For existing achievements (funded projects, projects that ended in the past fiscal year, and submitted proposals), specify the nature of the item (funded, submitted), funding source (e.g., **VA HSR&D, NIH, AHRQ**), funding amount and funding period. Include in Appendix 2; 1) the project abstracts and 2) a concise table of the achievements (for example, a project with start and end dates, status of funding, funding source and list of publications from the project).”

Q7. What should be included for “Academic Field” in “HSR&D CoE Core Staff Organization” Table described in the Appendix, Section (3), d Facilities and Capacity, vi, Table 1 “HSR&D CoE Core Staff Organization”?

Answer. “Academic Field” should describe the area of education such as, psychiatry, primary care medicine, nursing, biostatistics, etc. The following table provides examples:

<u>Name/Position</u>	<u>Personnel Qualifications</u>	<u>FTE</u>
SUSAN S. SMITH, PhD, MD GS level Director (PI)	Biostatistics/Preventive Medicine 32 years, teaching 17 years, clinical 16 years, research Major research interests: Practice Patterns, Cardiovascular Diseases, Diabetes	0.5 (contributed)
JOHN D. DOE, PhD, MPH, GS level Biostatistician	Academic Field Biostatistics/Health Services Administration 5 years, teaching 7 years, research Major research interests: Dynamic Modeling, Quality of Care Measures, Benchmarking, Databases, Medical Informatics	0.6

Q8. What is the difference between Appendix 1 (Current and Pending VA and non-VA Research Support) and Appendix 2 (Related Ongoing Projects)?

Clarification-Answer. **Appendix 1 should include:** a list of the proposed research staff and each person's current and pending total VA and non-VA research support (if applicable), including funding period dates for each listed item and emphasize the relevance to the selected priority area(s) [using the VA forms noted in the solicitation Attachment A, page A-6, section 3, g, i]. **Appendix 2 should include:** the related project abstracts or VA Form 10-1436 for each submitted and funded proposals discussed in Appendix 1, and the table of achievements and future activities, if applicable. The table may include other projects investigators at that site may be involved in, but may not be in the exact research focus of the Center.

~~**Previous Answer.** The primary difference is that in Appendix 1, the projects should emphasize the relevance to the selected priority area or theme proposed for the Center of Excellence. Appendix 2 should discuss other projects investigators at that site may be involved in, but may not be in the exact research focus of the Center.~~

- ~~i) Appendix 1. Current and Pending VA and Non-VA Research Support. For proposed staff, list each person's current and pending total VA and non-VA research support (if applicable), including funding period dates for all items listed, using **VA Form 10-1313-7 (emphasizing relevance to the selected priority area(s))**. Pending requests should be included, even if there is no current support. Add **VA Form 10-1313-8** only when needed to elaborate information as requested in Form 10-1313-7.~~
- ~~ii) Appendix 2. Related Ongoing Projects. Insert project abstracts or VA Form 10-1436 for submitted and funded proposals, and table of achievements and future activities, if applicable.~~

Q9. Does the CoE solicitation allow applicants to propose affiliate or satellite campuses for their intended Center of Excellence?

Answer. As a general rule over the past few years, HSR&D has not encouraged dual or affiliate campus arrangements in Center applications. The FY07 CoE solicitation includes the following in Appendix A, section 3, d, vi, (f), (v) related to this subject:

(v) Describe and document the commitment of the medical facility (or consortium of facilities) to the CoE, and indicate how the involvement of other collaborating scientific groups (or facilities) will be managed routinely. (One-two pages).

If an applicant were to request an affiliate or satellite CoE arrangement, approval for funding would remain subject to the same merit review criteria, and reviewer/administrative evaluations of the "potential for success" as a single campus application. Solicitation requirements for letters of support, narrative descriptions, and organizational structure/management justifications should be included from the proposed stakeholders and should articulate the benefits of any suggested affiliation(s).

Q10. What kind of information should be submitted for section 3, d, vi, (f) (ii) on page 5 of Attachment A about the mechanism for center evaluation and quality assurance? Are there any examples?

Answer. This section relates to how Centers evaluate themselves. It states:

(ii) Describe the CoE mechanism for center program evaluation and quality assurance.

This section could be completed using a multitude of approaches and quality measures. Applicants are expected to articulate what occurs at their own location. There are no examples at this time since this should be individualized in the applications due in March.

Q11. In regard to Attachment A, Section 3, d, vi, (c) and (d), Table 1, do years as a post-doctoral fellowship count as years in research for investigators? What type of teaching should be counted for years of teaching? Is it didactic teaching only, serving as a content mentor only, or both?

Answer. It is up to the discretion of the proposed Center Director to describe investigator positions at the CoE. If it is reasonable and applicable to the Center to note research done by investigators during their post-doctoral years, then the Director may choose to add this in the descriptions. This section is to indicate related research and pertinent expertise.

It is also up to the discretion of the proposed Director to determine the relevance of staff to the Center as their information relates to the selected priority area(s) of the proposed CoE.

The following is the Section excerpt from the solicitation:

Attachment A, Section 3, d, vi:

(c) List CoE core staff (proposed and/or identified) and provide a one-paragraph description of their positions, related responsibilities and related research or other pertinent expertise. (One-two pages)

(d) Present an overview of staff in table form (see example, Table 1), emphasizing his/her relevance to the selected priority area(s). (One page)

TABLE 1: HSR&D CoE CORE STAFF ORGANIZATION

<u>Name/Position</u>	<u>Personnel Qualifications</u>	<u>FTE</u>
SUSAN S. SMITH, degree, GS level Director (PI)	Academic field x years, teaching y years, clinical z years, research (major research interests)	0.5 (contributed)
JOHN D. DOE, degree, GS level Biostatistician	Academic field x years, teaching y years, research (major research interests)	0.6

Q12. Which of the CoE's key VA and non-VA collaborating staff should have 10-1313-5/6 forms included in the proposal submission?

Answer. Attachment A, Section 3, d, vi, (b-d) address this question best. Referencing b, c, and d, 10-1313-5/6 forms would be submitted for the key research personnel in Table 1 which lists CoE core staff. These may include non-VA collaborators such as biostatisticians, economists, etc. Who to submit these for from your entire Center roster is at the discretion of the Center Director (PI).

In addition, VA form 10-1313-7 should only be submitted for proposed research staff, listing each person's current and pending total VA and non-VA research support (if applicable), including funding period dates for all items listed (emphasizing relevance to the selected priority area(s)). Pending requests should be included, even if there is no current support. Add VA Form 10-1313-8 only when needed to elaborate information as requested in Form 10-1313-7.

Q13. In Section 3, d, vi (Facilities and Capacity), (f), (iii), should the narrative describe non-clinician investigators rather than core administrative or research (non-investigator) staff?

Answer. The response intention for Section 3, d, vi (Facilities and Capacity), (f), (iii), is to provide a description of non-clinician Center staff such as PhD junior investigators, academic mentors, etc.

Q14. There seems to be some overlap between Section 3, d, vi (Facilities and Capacity), (f), (v) – “commitment of the medical facility to the COE” and Section 3, d, vi, (b) (Facilities and Other Resources) – “available facilities for the COE”. Is the latter section for applicants without an existing COE? Would existing Centers describe their own facilities when describing the commitment of the medical facility?

Answer. The response to Section 3, d, vi (Facilities and Capacity), (f), (v), is at the discretion of the Center Director (PI) regarding how inclusive or exclusive the narrative should be. This section may include a description of the commitment of the medical facility to the CoE for support such as dedicated FTE positions, administrative services, protected research time, etc.

The response to Section 3, d, vi (Facilities and Other Resources), (b), is also at the discretion of the Center Director (PI). For established Centers, this section may include a description of support for designated contiguous space, equipment, planned renovations, conference facilities, etc. The same may be applicable for new Centers, but may include floor plans for intended Center space, donated major equipment such as copiers or printers, maintenance support for IT services, etc.

Q15. The solicitation asks to append any negotiated memoranda of understanding, signed by the appropriate officials of each participating institution. What sorts of collaborations require (or benefit from) a memorandum of understanding? I do not believe we need an MOU with our academic affiliate, but we might want one if there was some specific contribution that either our affiliate or another entity has agreed to make. The VHA Handbook/R&D Directive has this definition:

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). An MOU is a written agreement entered into by and between two or more parties to set forth the terms, conditions, and understandings of the parties with respect to a specific activity. For example, an MOU may be developed to delineate each party's responsibilities in collaborations between two or more federal agencies, or between a federal agency and a private entity.

Answer. Section 3, d, vi (Facilities and Other Resources), (a), requests a copy of any memoranda of understanding entered into or anticipated by the Center. Many Centers have an MOU with their affiliate or other entities to establish agreements for shared efforts such as recruiting, FTE support, faculty appointments, data analysis support, shared accommodations for conferences/lectures, mentoring, etc. Facilities that have MOUs vary by location and local protocols for these arrangements through the facility Director, R&D office or affiliates.

Q16. In Appendix 2 listing funded and related projects, should it include a listing the total project funding amount for all sites, or only reflect that portion of the funding related to our center? Also, should this be a 'to date' total, or should it be the total award for all years?

Answer. Appendix 2 should reflect the status of project funding to date for the portion of funds that flows only through your Center.

Q17. According to the COE Solicitation, Appendices are limited to 30 pages excluding VA forms. Is the Form 10-1436 (project abstract) considered a VA form and therefore excluded from the page limit?

Answer. Yes. We refer to this form in Handbooks and solicitations and would consider it a VA form.

Q18. Can we change the name of our Center?

Answer. Yes. The application should clearly indicate the change in Center title and explain the rationale for the change.